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## **Wisconsin Concludes *Jeanine B. v. Evers and Department of Children and Families* Settlement Agreement**

MADISON — Today, Chief Judge Pamela Pepper of the United States Federal Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin approved ending the Consent Decree in *Jeanine B. v. Evers and Department of Children and Families*. A Settlement Agreement approved by the court in the 2002 Consent Decree ended litigation of this class action lawsuit and established benchmarks applicable to DCF's child welfare work in Milwaukee County. The Settlement Agreement has facilitated substantial improvement of the child welfare services provided to Milwaukee County's children and families and assisted in the development of strong and lasting community partnerships.

"Today's decision would not be possible without the collaborative work of our child welfare professionals and community partners," said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "Over the last two decades, thousands of people have worked together to build a trauma-informed system that not only keeps our communities safe but also empowers and uplifts families. I am incredibly proud of all that we have accomplished and look forward to continuing our efforts to serve Milwaukee County's children and families."

The *Jeanine B.* lawsuit dates to 1993. While the litigation was ongoing, the Legislature transferred responsibility for child welfare services in Milwaukee County to the state in 1998. The 2002 Settlement Agreement established 19 performance measures relating to the permanence, safety, and well-being of Milwaukee County children in care. All but one of those measures, relating to placement stability, now has been met. Children's Rights, counsel for the class of plaintiff children, and defendants DCF and Governor Evers, therefore jointly asked the court to end the Consent Decree and release the defendants from the Settlement Agreement benchmarks.

"DCF's long-term public investment in adequate staffing, accountability, and community partnerships has improved the safety, health, and well-being of vulnerable children and families in Milwaukee County," said Children's Rights attorney Eric Thompson. "While the work is never done, DCF has fully embraced the reform process first committed to in response to our lawsuit. The agency's years of consistent, documented improvements allowed the Court to terminate court oversight."

While today's decision is a huge milestone for the state, it does not change DCF's commitment to continue to provide the best possible child welfare services to Milwaukee County children and families in a transparent and collaborative fashion. Members of the public can still access Milwaukee County child welfare data by visiting <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/data> and view recent Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council materials at

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>. Additionally, court filings and other key documents related to the *Jeanine B.* settlement agreement are available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/settlement>.

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